U.S. Won't Shift Cuban Policies, Guevara Says

By Bernard D. Nossiter
The Washington Post Foreign Service

GENEVA, March 31—Ernesto "Che" Guevara today said he is glad that Sen. J. W. Fulbright "recognizes" that the Castro regime is "here to stay."

The Cuban Minister of Industry said at a news conference that this was the "most important" feature of the Arkansas Democrat's foreign policy speech last week. However, Guevara made clear that he doubted it would have much immediate effect on U.S.-Cuban relations.

He reminded newsmen that Secretary of State Dean Rusk had rejected Fulbright's approach the next day. Both, he said, are important personages, but "we have to be objective in our analysis."

To underscore this point, the chief of the Cuban economy indicated his doubts that the United States would accept Premier Castro's offer to open discussions.

Low-Key Performance

The United States, Guevara said, attaches a "strange and difficult condition" to any talks, "the non-existence of the present regime." He added that Washington in effect wants talks "without our being there."

Guevara had no prepared statement and answered questions for 80 minutes in one of the large conference rooms at the Palais des Nations here. On the whole, it was a low-key performance compared with some of his past sessions with the press. His answers generally were restrained and he avoided obvious opportunities to gibe at the United States.

This may have been due in part of Guevara's recognition that his tub-thumping speech last week to the United Nations Trade Conference fell flat. He even joked about this himself, saying in explanation of his lack of an opening statement: "I've already spoken more than enough in the plenary."

3 Goals Seen

There is considerable speculation over why Guevara is remaining at the trade conference. Typically, ministers have given their speeches and then departed, leaving their delegations in the hands of No. 2 men. Guevara spoke last Wednesday but stays on in Geneva.

The prevailing belief is that he is working at three goals:

1. Sounding out West Europeans on more trade.

2. Fostering Latin American nations' disenchantment with the cool U.S. approach toward their trade plans so that they will support Cuba's struggle to end the North American embargo on trade with the island.

3. Seeking to put Cuba's relations with other Latin staates on a more relaxed footing.

Guevara said he was working on ending the "blockade" but declined to give details on the grounds that "indiscret ears" were listening.

As for the embargo, he said it had once hurt the Cuban economy but now it "is just a nuisance of secondary importance."

Ducks Question

In fact, he cracked, it was causing more trouble for the United States because it had created disputes among the Western Allies.

In other areas, Guevara ducked a question about Soviet troop strength and troop withdrawals from Cuba. He said only that Russia has some "technicians" on the island, teaching Cubans how to use "marvelous military equipment."

Guevara said, "we don't want to use them (the weapons), but we won't hesitate to use them if the moment comes."

Guevara said he wasn't worried that the current high price of sugar would induce excess production, thus depressing world prices. Russia has agreed, he said, to buy 5 million tons a year from Cuba until 1970 at 6 cents a pound.

Associated Press

Cuban Minister of Industry Ernesto Guevara said at Geneva that the speech by U.S. Sen. J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.) could have improved the atmosphere if Secretary of State Dean Rusk had not rejected it.